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25 MR. HOPKINS: My name is Steve Hopkins. I am
1 a resident of Boise. I also work for the Snake
2 River Alliance of Idaho. However, my comments
3 tonight are my own. I don't necessarily reflect
4 the position of the Snake River Alliance.

5 Like many here tonight I am a
6 self-proclaimed expert in nuclear issues. I have a
7 background in philosophy and science. However, I
8 have never received any money from the nuclear
9 industry nor any money from the Department of
10 Energy nor the nuclear Navy, and I never will.

11 I would like to expose a few myths about
12 this project about Yucca Mountain and make some
13 comments on the EIS. I have not yet had the
14 opportunity to review in full, so I will submit a
15 detail brief comments at later time.

8... 16 First of all, I would like to start with
17 some congratulations in terms of what DOE has
18 looked at. They have done a few things right. I
19 think most importantly here that you are not
20 looking at the possibility of ever reprocessing
21 this fuel. That you are going to be treating it as
22 a waste. And currently the Department of Energy
23 doesn't define spent fuel as a waste, but there is
24 no better term for it, and it should be officially
25 classified as a waste; therefore, closing a circle

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1 on reprocessing of this waste.

2 I have to mention that reprocessing as
3 it has been portrayed by the nuclear industry as
4 recycling is a way that does extract uranium and
5 plutonium. However, it's a process that results in
6 ever more dangerous and harder to contain form of
7 waste in a form of high-level liquid waste that's
8 also contaminated with hazardous constituents. So
9 in the process of getting that useful uranium and
10 plutonium, a bigger problem is arrived at. Here in
11 Idaho we still have to put in a more stable form
12 much of our liquid high-level waste; Hanford also
13 has to attack that problem. Liquid waste by
14 definition is hard to contain. Reprocessing
15 results in more waste and more difficult waste form
16 to manage.

17 It is also one of the things that the
18 United States has done in a responsible manner to
19 prevent the spread of nuclear weapons material
20 around the world. Although we don't do enough
21 today. Reprocessing is -- by officially halting
22 reprocessing we are sending a responsible message
23 to the rest of the world that we are not engaging
24 in activity that can result in more weapons-useable
25 material.

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1 In terms of the some of the myths about
2 Yucca Mountain I think one of the biggest ones is
3 that there is something endemic to this area that
4 can isolate this highly radioactive waste from the
5 environment. That there is some special property
6 at Yucca Mountain that makes it the best site for a
7 repository. And that's absolutely a myth.

8 Basically as I have looked at this
9 process in terms of supposed progress, I know that
10 the Department of Energy is looking more and more
11 at containment of this material through the use of
12 the canisters and not the facility itself. But
13 basically in Yucca Mountain you have nothing more
14 than a glorified platform. The basic containments
15 is the container itself.

16 And that really begs the question as to
17 why we would need a centralized platform when these
18 containers can be used on site to store the wastes
2 safely. [Nuclear waste should be stored as close to
20 its point of generation as possible. And the
21 Department of Energy by taking ownership of this
22 waste does not need to take it away from the sites.
23 It can be managed on site.] So that is one myth.
24 Yucca Mountain is not -- there is nothing special
25 about it that will isolate waste from the

1 environment. It is basically canisters that is
2 going to isolate waste from the environment.

3 I have spoken to a number of geologists
3 4 about Yucca Mountain. [And indeed its to the
5 contrary in terms of the stability of the area, a
6 number of geologists that I have spoken to point to
7 the geology they would find more on the east coast
8 that would be a better barrier to displace than
9 what you have at Yucca Mountain.]

4 10 So really what you have here is a
11 political shaft. It's been a political process all
12 along. There is nothing -- there might have been
13 and there still is today science that goes into the
14 study of the mountain but in terms of how that
15 mountain was selected it was not a scientific
16 process at all. It was basically, let's look at a
17 politically weak state with few people, and we are
18 just going to place the nation's burden on that
19 particular state.

20 Eighty percent of people in Nevada
21 oppose this facility, and if we live in a
22 Democratic nation at all, our country has to take
23 note of that. If Nevada is ramrodded on this it
24 really exposes how shallow our democracy is.

9 25 So here we have a monumental task that

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1 is being undertaken by the Department of Energy.
2 The Department of Energy has a track record of
3 undertaking such monumental tasks and failing
4 utterly.

5

5 I especially would like to point out
6 that this current Environmental Impact Statement
7 only analyzes really no action versus Yucca
8 Mountain. And this is the most difficult
9 environmental task the Department of Energy has
10 ever undertaken and does not analyze a full range
11 of alternatives. It is really a big mistake. And
12 I think it is an egregious assault on the process.

6...

13 Another myth, and it pertains
14 specifically to Idaho, is that this facility will
15 solve our nuclear waste problems. However, the
16 facility would take a portion of our waste and not
17 our entire inventory. There is specific warning in
18 the Governor's agreement that Governor Batt signed
19 in 1995 with the nuclear Navy and Department of
20 Energy that removes the limit on shipments of spent
21 fuel to Idaho once this repository is in place.

22 I think you have to look at what is
23 going on right now with the electro-metallurgical
24 technology. The Department of Energy wants to use
25 that to treat special batches of fuel. But I know

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1 the Department of Energy is also considering that
2 treatment for other batches of fuel particularly
3 Navy fuel, foreign reactor fuel, and perhaps other
4 types of fuel. It's been talked about.

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5 So what you have here then in Idaho is
6 if Yucca Mountain should open, Idaho becomes a
7 processing facility. Certainly for not all the
8 wastes, but we would receive even more shipments of
9 waste should this facility open. And I might also
10 point out as it concerns the power processor that
11 the current waste stream that will result in that,
12 the high-level waste stream that has not been
13 characterized yet, and Yucca Mountain as it stands
14 can't take it.

15 And in the governor's agreement it is
16 mandated that spent fuel leave by 2035; however, it
17 is also specified in the agreement that there is a
18 target date for high-level waste relief. A target
19 date. And a waste stream from the power of
20 processor creates high-level waste. It is no
21 longer spent fuel, so, therefore, doesn't mean that
22 the waste would be leaving by 2035.

10...

23 Another myth that needs to be exposed is
24 is that the ratepayers really are the ones that are
25 funding this project in terms of those people who

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1 use commercial nuclear power. And that is true to
2 some extent, but there are some myths that need to
3 be exposed about that. It's not -- the repository
4 would not be funded entirely out of that fund.
5 There would still be taxpayer dollars that would
6 have to be used to operate the facility.

11

7 And it is also the case that the nuclear
8 industry is one of the most hugely subsidized
9 industries in the history of the world in an
10 economy that is supposed to be based on free market
11 principles. It is really an insult to the people
12 of this country that the industry receives the
13 degree of subsidies that it does.

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14 So it's unfair to say that this facility
15 is being supported financially by the ratepayers
16 because taxpayers in general have to subsidize the
17 reactors, and we also have to subsidize facilities.

18 And I think I will leave my comments on that.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. BROWN: Okay. Thanks very much.

21 MS. SWEENEY: Thank you.

22 MR. BROWN: I will call our next speaker.

23 Thanks.